DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 416 320 CE 075 669

AUTHOR	Lundgren, Mary Beth
TITLE	Getting To Know Computers.
INSTITUTION	Project LEARN, Cleveland, OH.
SPONS AGENCY	Ameritech Foundation, Chicago, IL.
PUB DATE	1997-00-00
NOTE	58p.
AVAILABLE FROM	Project: LEARN, 1701 Payne Ave., Cleveland, OH 44114; phone: 216-621-9483; World Wide Web: http://www.netmarkinc.com/projectlearn ($8.50 plus $1.25 shipping and handling).
PUB TYPE	Guides - Classroom - Learner (051)
EDRS PRICE	EDRS Price MF01 Plus Postage. PC Not Available from EDRS.
DESCRIPTORS	Adult Basic Education; Adult Literacy; Computer Games; *Computer Literacy; *Computer Software; *Internet; Literacy Education; *Microcomputers; Vocabulary; Vocabulary Development

ABSTRACT

Originally written for adult new readers involved in literacy programs, this book is also helpful to those individuals who want a basic book about computers. It uses the carefully controlled vocabulary with which adult new readers are familiar. Chapter 1 addresses the widespread use of computers. Chapter 2 discusses what a computer is and describes the parts of a personal computer. Chapter 3 tells what each of these parts of a computer does: monitor or screen, keyboard, mouse, central processing unit, hardware, and software. Chapter 4 focuses on how a computer works. It discusses the computer user, computer programs (software), computer programmers, disk, and disk drive. Chapter 5 provides the following information on using a computer: the monitor or screen, including the cursor; typing on the keyboard; typing keys; arrow keys; shift keys; function keys; escape key; backspace key; and enter key. Chapter 6 describes other things one can do with a computer, such as save, print, play games, word processing, networks, and Internet. Chapter 7 lists computer vocabulary followed by the number of a page in the text where one can read more about the word. (YLB)

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Getting to Know Computers

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by Mary Beth Lundgren

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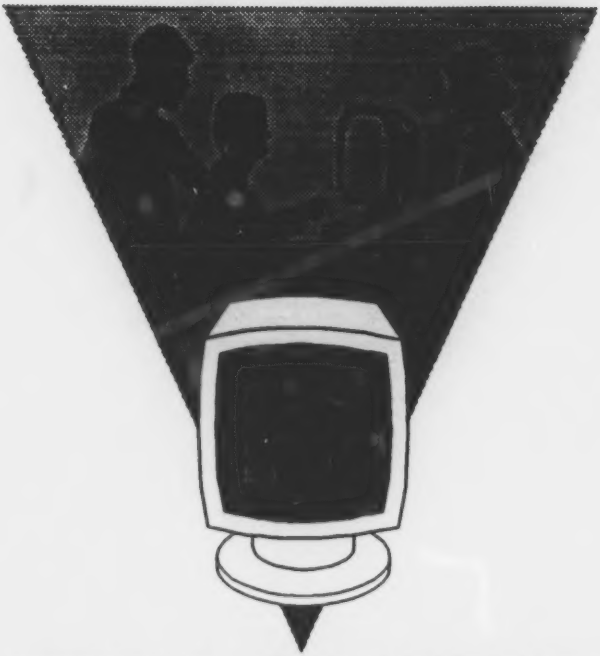

GETTING TO KNOW COMPUTERS

by

Mary Beth Lundgren

Graphics Layout by Richard L. Pursell

Project:LEARN gratefully acknowledges generous financial support from Ameritech for publication of this book.

And many thanks to computer consultant Ted Lundgren, best friend of the author, and president of TLH Consulting, Inc. Without Ted's technical expertise, patience, and time, this book would never have been written.

MBL

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NOTE: TO THE READER

This book was originally written for adult new readers involved in literacy programs. It uses the carefully controlled vocabulary with which those students are familiar. Some of the phrasing may, therefore, seem unusual to you.

We at Project:LEARN hope that the book will, nonetheless, be helpful to those of you who want a basic book about computers.

Chapter 1

Computers Are Everywhere

There are things about how computers work that you don't know. You don't need to know everything about computers to be able to use them and talk about them.

Computers are everywhere today. You see them on TV, in homes, and factories. They are in banks, stores, and the doctor's office. Some companies have one on every desk. Everyone talks about them.

Do you have a telephone? The telephone company computer keeps track of your telephone account. It keeps track of thousands and thousands of telephone numbers. It helps you make calls in the city. It helps you make calls to other countries. It keeps a record of your calls for your bill.

Do you have a checking account? The bank's computer keeps track of the money you have in your checking account. It keeps a record of the checks you write.

It tells you how much money you have left in your checking account at the end of the month.

Do you have an account at a store? The company's computer keeps a record of what you buy. It uses the record to print a bill. The bill tells you what you must pay each month.

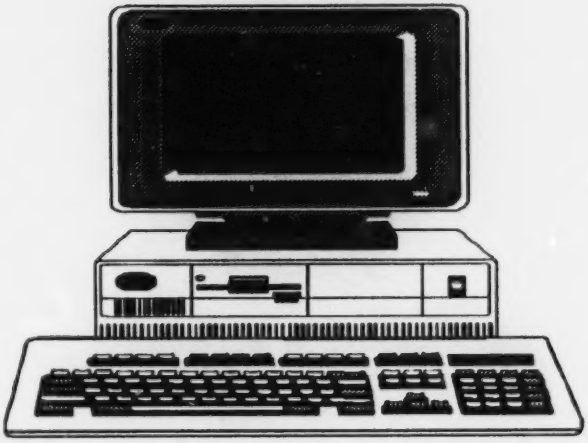
Do you take the bus? The bus company computer makes up bus timetables.

You won't learn everything about computers by reading this book. But you will learn a lot.

There are many words that are special for computers. Chapter 7 lists the words you need to know.

Chapter 2

What Is a Computer?



Some people think a computer works by magic. There is nothing magic about a computer. It is only a machine.

You can't see a computer work but this is how it does it. It turns thousands of small switches on and off very fast. It's a machine that turns switches on and off at high speed. That's not magic.

A computer only knows what people tell it. It only does what people tell it to do. A computer is not magic.

A computer can get broken just like any other machine.

A person working on a computer can make a mistake. There is nothing magic about that.

A computer can make mistakes. People call a computer mistake a bug.

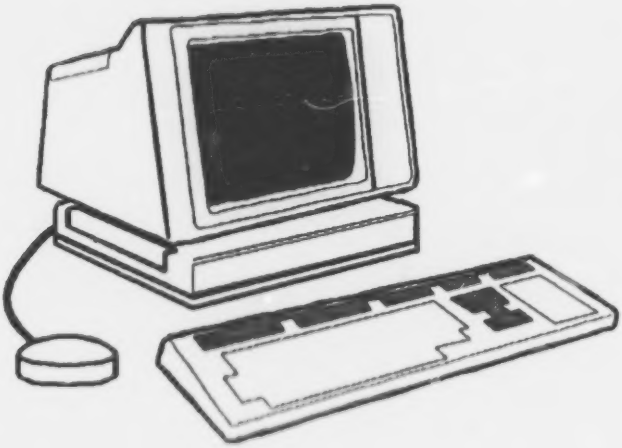
Sometimes there is something the matter with the computer switches and no one can tell why a mistake happened. That's a computer bug.

People sometimes say the bug happened by magic. There is nothing magic about switches that don't go on and off right.

Remember. Nothing about a computer is magic, not even a computer bug.

There are many different kinds of computers. Some are so small they fit in your hand. Some are large enough to fill a building. You will learn about only one kind of computer in this book, the personal computer.

Personal Computer (PC)



People say personal computer when they talk about a computer that sits on a desk or table. Or they just say PC for short. People use personal computers at home and they use them in companies.

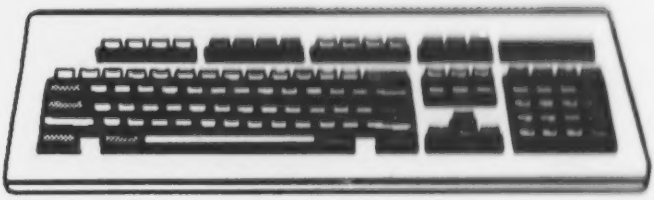
The Parts of a Computer

A personal computer is made up of three parts. They are the monitor, the keyboard, and the central processing unit. They work together and sit near one another on the desk or table.

The Monitor

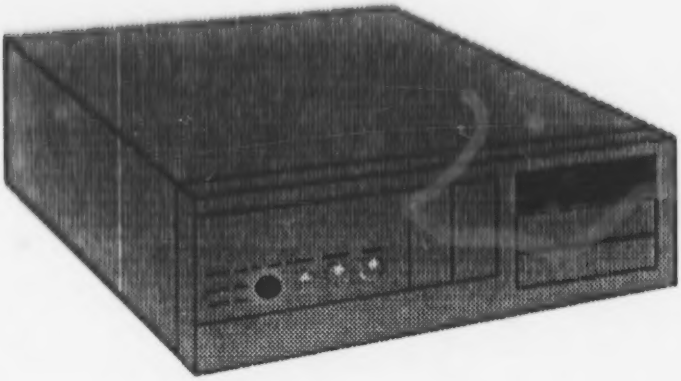
The computer monitor has a screen like a TV. You can also call the monitor a screen.

The Keyboard



The keyboard has keys with letters, numbers, or special signs on them. Some keys have special uses.

The Central Processing Unit



The central processing unit is called CPU for short. Central means in the center. That is where the work goes on in a computer. That is where the switches turn on and off at high speed.

Processing means to organize, keep track of, file, and update records. Unit means one part.

The CPU is in a box that is under or next to the monitor. You can't see inside the box.

The Mouse

Some computers also have a unit called a mouse connected to them. (You can see a picture of one connected to the PC shown on page 7.) Some people say it looks like a real mouse, and that the cord connecting it to the computer is like a long tail. The computer mouse rolls on a ball in the bottom of the unit, and has buttons on top.

The next chapter will tell you what each part of the computer does.

Chapter 3
What Each Part of a Computer Does

The monitor, keyboard, and CPU are connected together but each part does different things.

The Monitor or Screen

Monitor means to watch. The monitor lets you watch some of what the computer does.

The monitor is also called a display screen. Display means to show. The screen shows what you are doing when you work on a computer. It also displays the information the computer needs to give you. It displays answers to your questions.

The Keyboard

The keyboard sits on a desk or table. You press the keys on the keyboard to type. You enter information and type commands to the computer by pressing the keys.

What you type on the keyboard shows up on the monitor screen most of the time.

The Mouse

If you have a mouse connected to your computer, you can move the mouse across your desk or table and click buttons to give commands to the computer instead of typing on the keyboard.

The Central Processing Unit (CPU)

The CPU does the work you command the computer to do. It processes the information you give it. What you type on the keyboard goes through the box where the CPU is. It shows up on the monitor screen most of the time.

The CPU is what makes the computer work. It is at the center of everything.

The CPU organizes everything into computer files. It keeps track of the files and updates them.

Just remember. Nothing about the computer is magic, even if you can't see it work.

Hardware

Hardware is the word for the parts of a computer that you can see and touch. The keyboard, monitor, mouse, and CPU are hardware.

Software

Software is the word for the parts of a computer that you can't see or touch. You will learn more about software in the next chapter.

Chapter 4
How a Computer Works

A computer takes information from people, organizes the information at high speed, and keeps track of it in files. It updates records and displays the changes it makes.

No computer works alone. It's a machine. It needs a person in order to work. And it needs a person to give it commands.

Computer User

A person who uses a computer is called a computer user, or user for short.

The computer user gives commands to the computer to tell it what to do. One way a user does this is by typing on the keyboard.

Sometimes the user does what the computer tells him to do.

A computer user can do many things on a computer. You will learn some of them in Chapter 6.

Computer Programs (Software)

Computer programs are organized plans for a computer. They are also called software. Computer programs give commands to the computer. They tell it which switches to turn on and off.

Some computer programs come with the computer when you buy it. They are stored in the computer.

Some programs are not part of the computer. You'll learn more about them next.

There are many different kinds of programs. Some are small. Some are very large and have hundreds of thousands of commands.

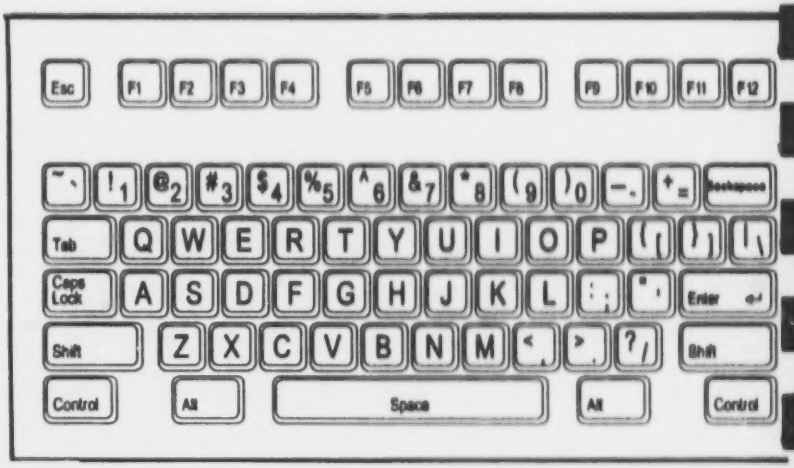
Some programs work with numbers at high speed. Some are for games or music. Some programs work with words. People use word processing programs to write stories or letters to their friends.

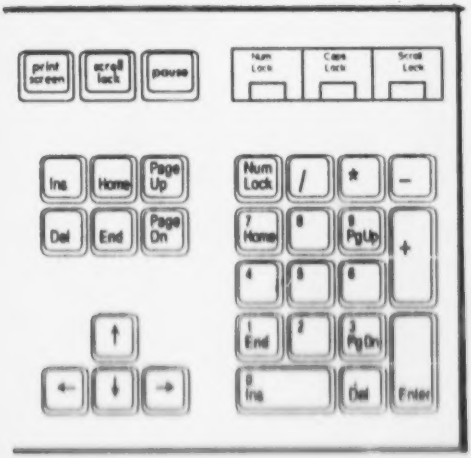
Computer Programmers

Computer programmers are people who write computer programs. They know a lot about computers. Most computer users are not programmers.

You don't need to be a computer programmer to work with computers. You don't need a computer programmer at your desk next to you to work with a computer.

This is a picture of a keyboard. You will learn about it in the next chapter.



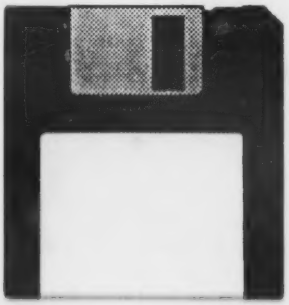


Go to the next page to learn more about how a computer works.

Disk

Some computer programs are stored on a disk that is in the computer. You can't see this disk. It's in the box with the CPU.

Here is a picture of a disk you can see.



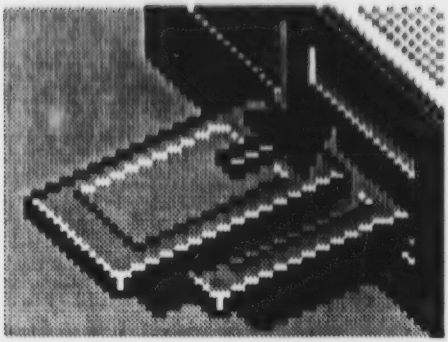
Many computer programs are stored on disks like this. You put these disks into the computer. The computer uses the programs stored on them.

Information is also stored on disks. The computer organizes and files this information when you tell it to.

You can use disks for many things. You use a disk when you want to save your typing.

Disks are hardware but the programs on the disks are software.

Disk Drive



Each computer has a disk drive in the box with the CPU. You can see the opening in the box.

You put a disk into the disk drive when you want to use the computer programs or information on the disk. You take the disk from the disk drive when you're finished with it. The disk drive is hardware.

Chapter 5

Using the Computer

This chapter will give you a lot of the information you need to know when you start using a computer. No one remembers everything after reading it the first time.

The Monitor or Screen

The Cursor

The cursor is the dot or line that shows you where you are typing on the monitor screen. The cursor on most computers blinks on and off. It blinks to show you where you are typing. Look for the blinking cursor if you forget.

Typing on the Keyboard

See the large picture of the keyboard in the back of the book. Or look at the picture on pages 22 and 23.

Some keyboards are smaller and don't have as many keys. Some are bigger with

more keys. Some have different words or signs on some of the special keys.

But most keyboards look like the one in the pictures. You will learn only about this keyboard in this book. You will learn about the keys people use most.

Typing Keys

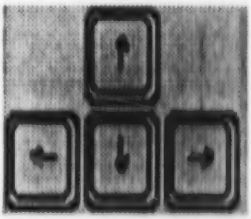
Typing keys are the keys that have letters and numbers on them. Look at the picture of the keyboard to see where the typing keys are.

The letter or number on the key displays on the screen when you press one of these keys.

There are other typing keys. The special signs over the numbers on the number keys also display on the screen. Many other signs, like the question mark (?) also display.

Arrow Keys

Here is a picture of the arrow keys.



The arrow keys are to the right of the typing keys on the keyboard.

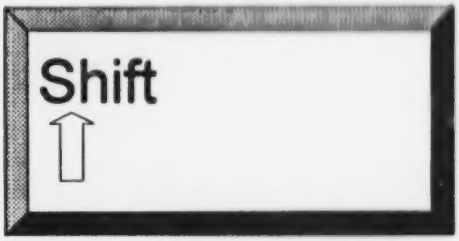
Look at the picture of the keyboard to see where the arrow keys are.

The arrows on the keys are up , down , right and left .

You can make the blinking cursor go up, down, right, or left by pressing the arrow keys. This lets you move the cursor to fix what you have typed.

Shift Keys

Here is a picture of a Shift key.



There are two Shift keys. One is on the right, below the Enter key. The other is just to the left of the Z key.

Look at the picture of the keyboard to see where the Shift keys are.

You hold down the shift key at the same time you press a letter key to type

a capital letter. The computer will display a small letter if you don't press the Shift key at the same time.

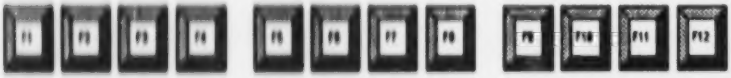
The Shift key also tells the computer to use the numbers or signs at the top of the typing keys.

Look at the picture of the keyboard. Find the key with the question mark (?) on it. It's next to the Shift key on the right side. The question mark (?) is on the top of the key. A line (/) is down below on the the key.

The computer will use what is down below on keys like this if you don't use the Shift key first. You must hold the Shift key down at the same time you press the key if you want the computer to type what is at the top of the key.

Function Keys

Function keys give the computer special commands. Here is a picture of the function keys.



There are twelve of these keys at the top of the keyboard. Each one has an F and a number next to it - F1, F2, F3, and so on.

Look at the picture of the keyboard to see where the function keys are.

A function key acts. It gives the computer a command when you press it.

The F1 key displays information to help you use the program you're working with on most computers.

The computer copies what you just typed when you press the F3 key on most computers.

ESC (Escape Key)

ESC stands for escape. Escape means to get away or to quit doing something.

Here is a picture of the ESC key. Look at the picture of the keyboard to see where the ESC key is.

Press the ESC key when you want to escape or get away from what you are doing on the computer at that time.

Backspace Key

Here is a picture of the Backspace key.

The Backspace key is under the F12 function key on the keyboard.

Look at the picture of the keyboard to see where the Backspace key is.

Press the Backspace key to tell the computer you want it to take away what you have just typed. Each time you press the Backspace key, the computer will take away the letter or number to the left of the cursor. The Backspace key helps you fix mistakes.

Enter Key

Here is a picture of the Enter key.

The Enter key is at the right of the letter and number keys.

Look at the picture of the keyboard to see where the Enter key is.

The Enter key has different uses for different programs. One use is in a word processing program. Press the Enter key to make the blinking cursor go to the next line when you're typing a story or a letter.

Chapter 6

Other Things You Can Do With a Computer

You can do many things when you work with a computer. Here are some of them.

Save

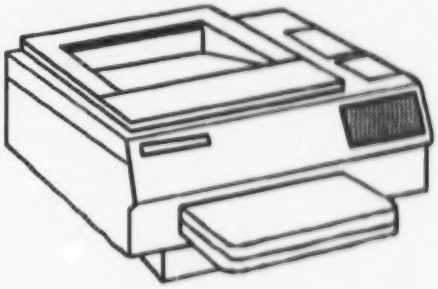
You can save or store what you have typed when everything is just the way you want it. You can use a function key to save on some computers.

The computer saves what you have typed only when you command it to save it. It will save your typing as long as

it's in a file. You can look at what you have typed at any time.

Print

Most computers are also connected to a printer. Here is a picture of one of the many kinds of printers.



You can command the computer to print if you want a paper copy of what you have typed. The computer does not have paper in it but the printer does. The computer commands the printer to make as many copies as you want. But it does this only when you tell it to.

The computer saves what you type after the printer makes the paper copies. You can print a copy as long as the computer saves your typing in a file.

Play Games

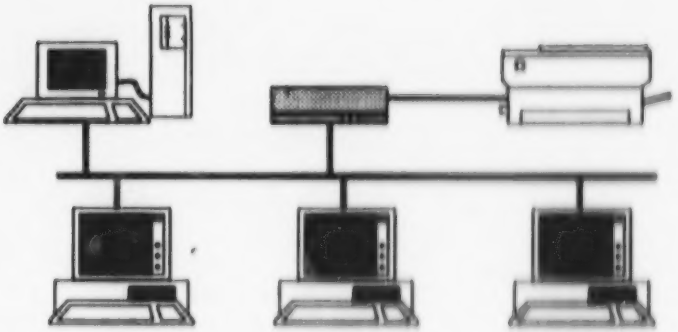
Some disks have computer games stored on them. Games are fun to play. Some also help you learn. You can play the games on these disks when you put them in the disk drive of the computer. The games are software. The disks are hardware.

Word Processing

A word processing program keeps track of, files, organizes, and updates the information you type. It can check your typing. It helps fix any mistakes you make. It helps you save what you have typed.

You can type letters or stories. This book was typed on a computer using a word processing program.

Networks



Small networks connect together a small number of computers. Big networks connect a large number of computers at large companies.

You can work together with other computer users if you are working on a computer connected to the same network.

Internet

There is a great big network called the Internet or the World Wide Web. Some people say it is an information superhighway.

The Internet connects thousands of computers around the world. If your computer is connected to the Internet, you can ask questions, answer questions, or get information from anywhere in the world. It's like talking to people on the telephone anywhere in the world. But you type on a machine instead of talking.

You need special hardware, software, and programs to connect a computer to the Internet.

Chapter 7
Words You Need to Know

You have read the first six chapters of this book so you know what a computer is.

You know the parts of a Personal Computer. You know many things about how a computer works. You have read about using a computer. You know where many of the keys are on the keyboard. You know what they do.

You know some of the special words that people use when they work with computers.

Here is a list of the special words you have learned. There is a page number after each one. You can read more about the word if you go back to that page in the book.

Special Word.....See Page

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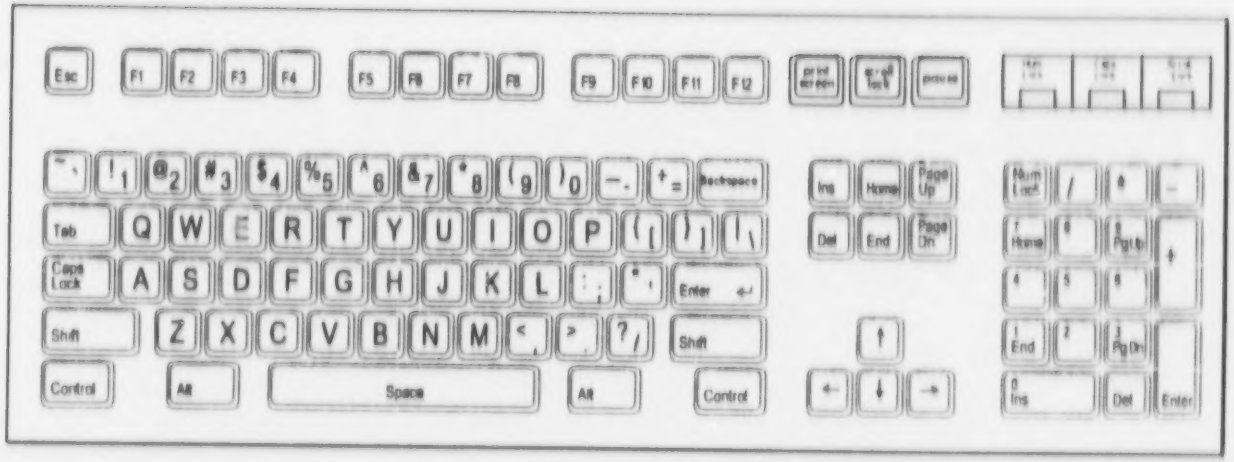

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An introduction to computers - what they are and how they work. Includes extensive word list. Best read with tutor.

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